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“Leadership transition on the Korean
peninsula 2012:
Uncertainty, Tension and Opportunity?”

delivered by

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Chair: Youngmi Kim, Assistant Professor, DPP and IRES

Date: Monday, April 16, 2012

Time: 1:30 – 3.00 p.m.

Venue: Faculty Tower, Room 309

The transition of political leadership in both North and South Korea by December 2012 could not stand in greater contrast for all stakeholders in the region and beyond, especially for the four super powers: the US, China, Russia and Japan. Unlike Kim Jong-un, who inherited his leadership in the North after the death of his father, Kim Jong-Il, at the end of 2011, a new leader in the South will emerge in December 2012 through arguably the most competitive presidential election the South Koreans will likely experience since their country's democratization in 1987.

What will be the implications of the two Koreas each having a new leader? Why does the Korean peninsula matter to the security of Asia and the Pacific and, in regard to nuclear security, the world? What are the new trends of this new leadership in the two Koreas, especially in the context of China's rise while the US is declining?

These questions will be discussed, with particular attention paid to three characteristics of leadership transition in both Koreas, namely, uncertainty, tension and opportunity, albeit each for different reasons and against different backgrounds.



Hyung-A Kim is Associate Professor of politics at the College of Asia and the Pacific in the Australian National University. She is the author of *Korea's Development under Park Chung Hee: Rapid Industrialization, 1961-79* (Routledge Curzon 2004), and editor of *Reassessing the Park Chung Hee Era, 1961-1979: Development, Political Thought, Democracy and Cultural Influence*, Seattle: A Center for Korea Studies Publication, University of Washington Press, 2011 (With Clark Sorensen). She has also published numerous articles, including "South Korea's Nation-Building: from Anti-Communist Industrialization to Civic Democracy" in Sally M Paine ed, *Nation Building in the Twentieth Century: Case Studies and Analyses*, M.E. Sharp (2009) and "State Bureaucracy Building: The Military Junta's Administrative Reforms, 1961-3," in Ezra Vogel and Byung-Kook Kim eds. *The Park Chung Hee Era*, Vol. 1, Harvard University Press (2011).